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GIOVANNI.

Oh mother, here's a stranger gentleman ;
And he has given me sugar-plums. Look here !

MICHAEL.

Madonna, may I hope for your forgiveness ?

MARIA.

Oh noble sir, I thank you for your kindness.
Hast thanked the gentleman ? (To GIOVANNI.)

GIOVANNI.

I thank you, sir !

MARIA.

You forward boy, where are your manners, sir ?

MICHAEL.

Let him alone, dear madam, do not mar
With the distortions of our o'er nice age.
His nature's pure, unwar'd'd simplicity.

MARIA.

You're fond of little ones ?

MICHAEL.

Because they are
So great. You live here ?

MARIA.

Yes, this is our cottage.

MICHAEL.

Antonio, the painter, is your husband ?

MARIA.

He is, signor.

MICHAEL.

If in his life he be
As truly good, as in his works he shows,
Then you indeed must be a happy wife.

MARIA.

Signor, his art is but a pale reflex
Of the bright sun within.

MICHAEL.

Indeed ?

MARIA.

Indeed.

MICHAEL.

And yet you seem unhappy, out of spirits.
A worthy active man, a handsome wife,
A darling child—here is a paradise
Of bliss domestic, perfect and complete.

MARIA.

Yet lacks there something for that perfect bliss.

MICHAEL.

And that is ?

MARIA.

Worldly fortune.

MICHAEL.

Are not, then,
Beauty and genius in themselves a fortune ?

MARIA.

In many a floweret lurks the canker worm !
My husband has been ill ; he's sensitive ;
Impressions, slight ones, move him to the quick.
This very day he had a heavy blow.

MICHAEL.

I know what happened. Michael Angelo
Was here, and dropped some irritating words.

, MARIA.

He wounded him most deeply.

MICHAEL.

But, perchance,
Friend Angelo said only what was truth.
He told him, he would never be a painter.
Who is to say but Angelo was right ?
He ought to know, if anybody should.

MARIA.

No ! though an angel were to come from heaven
And tell me so, I'd not believe him !

MICHAEL.

How !
Are you so confident in your opinion ?

MARIA.

Of this at least I am most confident,
That in my soul I love Antonio ;
His works are from himself inseparable,
So in my soul I love his glorious art.

MICHAEL.

And that suffices you ? You love, nor care
To sound the principles your love is based on ?

MARIA.

You men may sound and judge by principle,
But only to a point ; for you, like us,
Must often trust to simple feeling too.

MICHAEL.

Bravo, Madonna ! This is what I like.
Forgive me for thus putting you to proof ;
So fits it wives should think. But touching,
now,
This Michael Angelo,—he is a rough
Strange fellow, that is not to be denied ;
Yet trust me, not so heartless in the main !
His words are off the clanking of the Cyclops,
When the fire roars too fiercely,—yet he can
Be quiet too ; then he amasses stores
Of feeling and of thought, which to draw
For many a future day ; just as the camel
Drinks deeply of the spring for after need
Along the burning desert. The volcano
Is dread, yet fertile too. Its wrath once spent
Men throng in shoals to build along its brink ;
The seed shoots up anon to swelling grain ;
The chasm puts on a robe of shrubs and flowers,
And all is redolent of life and joy.

MARIA.

I do believe you, sir.

MICHAEL.

The merest trifles
Are oft the antecedents of great deeds.
The mountain sometimes doth bring forth a
mouse ;
But mice have often brought forth mountains
too.
Then marvel not, if a most soury trick
Of your malicious host have set
Friend Angelo at variance with your husband.
One hasty word begets another straight.
It is not only love, you know, that wears
A bandage on his eyes,—wrath does the same.

MARIA.

You speak most sagely and kindly, sir.

MICHAEL.

The Buonarotti sent me here—I am
His friend,—that I might tell you this from him ;
And as a proof, in what regard he holds
Antonio, offers him this ring,

(takes a ring from his finger.)

And begs,

He'll wear it henceforth as a pledge of friend
ship.

They'll meet in person at some future day ;
And then Antonio will have surer cause,
To know that Buonarotti means him well,
And has been zealous to advance his fortunes.

[Exit.

ANTONIO.

(who has come out of the cottage, but has re
mained in the background.)

Maria, love, what did he say to thee ?

MARIA.

The stranger ?

ANTONIO.

Yes, he, Michael Angelo !

MARIA.

Great heaven, Antonio ! Is it possible ?
Michael himself !

ANTONIO.

Yes, yes ! Himself, himself !
There is but one such man in all the world !

MARIA.

Oh, blessed chance ! Rejoice, Antonio !
He fondled our dear boy, and to myself
Spoke with respectful kindness. See, this ring
He sent thee as a gift. He prizes, loves thee,
And, noble heart ! will make our weal his care.

ANTONIO.

Oh, my Maria, and can this be so ?

Julio was right !

MARIA.

He values, honours thee !

ANTONIO.

This ring, too ! Oh ye heavens ! Come, come,
Maria !

He only humbled me in dust, to make
Me after rise more great and glorious.

Oh ! heavens, dare I, dare I believe it real ?

Come, I will thank him with these brimming
eyes,

Close to my bosom press him, and be blest !

MARIA.

Yes, he is right, great Buonarotti's right ;

Now blooms for us a paradise of bliss.

[Exit into the hotel.]

BATTISTA.

(comes forward, looks after him, and after a
pause, says)—

I'll make this paradise of yours complete ;
There is no paradise without its snake !

END OF ACT THIRD.

(To be continued.)

— — — — —

EYE OF TASTE.

The Painter's eye, to sovereign beauty true,
Marks every grace, and heightens every hue ;
Follows the fair through all her forms and wiles,
Studies her air, and triumphs in her smiles ;
Imagines wondrous scenes as fancy warms,
And revels, rich in all creation's charms.
His Art her homage, and his soul her shrine,
She rules his life, and regulates his line ;
While rapt to frenzy as the goddess fires,
He pours to view the visions she inspires.
Presented to the cultured eye of taste,
No rock is barren, and no wild is waste,
No shape uncouth or savage, but, in place,
Excites an interest, or assumes a grace ;
Whether the years successive seasons roll,
Or Proteus passion paint the varying soul ;
Whether, apart considered, or combined,
The forms of matter and the traits of mind.
Nature, exhaustless still, has power to warm,
And every change of scene, a novel charm.
The dome-crowned city, or the cottage plain,
The rough, craggy mountain, or tumultuous main ;
The temple, rich in trophied pride arrayed,
Or moulder in the melancholy shade ;
The spoils of tempest, or the wrecks of time ;
The earth abundant, and the heaven sublime ;
All to the Painter, purest joys impart,
Delight his eye, and stimulate his Art.
Nature for him unfolds her fairest day,
For he puts on her picturesque array ;
Beneath his eye new brightness all her charms,
And yields her blushing beauties to his arms,
His prize and praise—pursued in shades or crowds ;
He fancies prodigies and people clouds ;
Arrests in rapid glance each fleeting form,
Loves the mild calm, and studies in the storm.

M. A. SHEP.